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THE KATIPUNAN OF THE PHILIPPINES.

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It has been, perhaps, a matter of surprise to people in America that the insurrection in the Philippines should so long have been able to continue its existence, and many have attributed this to the valor of the Philippine soldiery. There could hardly be a greater mistake. The Philippine soldiery have not been able at any point to oppose even nominal resistance to the American occupation of every town and village in the Islands, and yet peace has not existed. The warlike conditions which have prevailed have been due, not to Philippine valor, but to the Katipunan, a powerful, all pervading, secret organization, nominally working for liberty, appealing to native ignorance and racial prejudice, dedicated to assassination, and bold and avowedly unscrupulous in the methods by which it attains its ends; a society which, without sanction of law or authority other than its own rules, assumed and freely exercised the power of punishing by death any person who disobeyed its mandates or otherwise incurred its displeasure, and which vested this power in the ignorant, local chiefs of its lodges throughout the Islands.

The object of the following pages is to trace briefly the history, purposes and work of this society. The facts presented have been obtained from native Philippine sources, or have come directly under the personal observation of the writer.

Until the advent of the Americans, the conditions which existed in the Philippines, outside of Manila, were truly mediæval in character. The Church and the State held joint authority; the sole duty of the people was obedience; of recognized rights, they had none. The towns were presided over by a municipal captain who received his orders from the provincial governor,

usually a soldier. The municipal captain was a native appointed, it would seem, on the recommendation of the curate, who was ordinarily a member of the regular clergy, or, as he was commonly termed, a friar. In later years, so-called elections were held, but the result was the same; the person selected by the friars was duly returned by the subservient voters, who comprised only the officials and property-owners of the town. The great mass of the people were dependent upon the proprietors, who were their feudal lords, they being obedient slaves.*

The real power in the eyes of the people was the friar, and he is charged with all manner of extortion and outrage. He is said to have been greedy of land and money, and to have lived in comparative splendor, at the expense of the people, in magnificent "convents," built for him by the forced labor and contributions of parishioners. He is charged with assuming the reins of civil government, while neglecting his proper duties of instructing the people, who were taught merely the formulas of the Roman Catholic Church and obedience to the priests.

General ignorance prevailed. Some learned the Spanish language, but ambition to study seems to have been repressed, and the reading of books not approved by the friars was, in practice, ground for deportation, the writing of them a capital offense. The way to a profession was made long and difficult; twelve years of study, at least, were required before a diploma would be granted which would enable a Filipino to practise a profession.

Since the opening of the Suez Canal, a few Filipinos, by favor, or as exiles, have been educated in Europe. Generally, however, the education of the people was discouraged.

For more than three centuries, these conditions obtained in the Islands, and a feeling of bitterness against the government at length arose, taking the form of opposition to the friars, and protests were made against their exactions; the power of the Church, however, was greater than that of Governors-General, and no heed was paid to the protests of the people.

The Tagals are, probably, the dominating tribe among the Philippine natives. Their home is the country around Manila and in the neighboring provinces. They have been, for this reason, brought more in contact with the Spaniards, and have

*The conditions existing in the Philippines from a native viewpoint may be studied in the novel, "Noli me Tangere," by Dr. José Rizal, a Filipino educated in Europe. The reading of this book was prohibited.

seen more of a civilization of which they had little part. It was natural that the contrast between Spaniards and natives should be noted there, that the discontent of the latter should be greater, and that there first should be found an organized opposition to their rulers.

It was in Manila, on the 7th of July, 1892, that the Katipunan Society of the Philippines was organized under the name of the "Supreme and Venerable Association of the Sons of the People," the word "katipunan" meaning association or society.

The founder and "soul of the society" was Andrés Bonifacio, an employee in a brick-yard. The purposes of the organization were stated to be the political, social and moral elevation of the Tagal race. The society grew rapidly in Manila and the Tagal provinces; and in July, 1896, the number of members was variously reported to be from 12,000 to 15,000. In the beginning, the formulas of Masonry were employed, but these were simplified to adapt them to the grade of intelligence of its members, who belonged to the lowest classes, and who are stated to have been "copyists, common soldiers, washermen, wood-gatherers, shoemakers and laborers"; the only person of education connected with the society was Dr. Pio Valensuela, who was initiated in 1895.*

When a new lodge was opened, a triangle was formed called "*Hasik*," or seed plot; and an equilateral triangle and three K's were the distinctive symbols of the Society. There were three degrees; a simple cipher and secret signs were adopted. The initiation ceremonies were made solemn and terrifying, to impress the candidate and to test his valor. He was first questioned in a cabinet, and then introduced into a dimly lighted room, where, upon a table draped in black, were a human skull, a loaded revolver, a bolo, or short native sword, and a paper upon which were written questions which he was required to answer. After this, various other tests were applied, followed by the administering of the oath, which was signed with blood taken from the left forearm of the candidate, who was then declared a member of the lowest degree.

The Supreme Council consisted of a President, Secretary,

*Much information concerning the early history of the Katipunan may be found in "*La Religión del Katipunan*," Madrid, 1900, by Isabelo de los Reyes, a Filipino, whose work has been largely consulted in the foregoing account.

Syndic, Treasurer and six members. This Council and the presidents of local lodges formed the Assembly.

Twenty-five women were admitted, to quiet their suspicions of the nocturnal excursions of their husbands. They were told that the object of the society was simply mutual aid. The Katipunan did, in fact, aid its sick and bury its dead, paying the expenses of funerals, "but always at the lowest rates, so as not to enrich the priests." The moral objects of the society were the teaching of democratic ideas, and an opposition to religious fanaticism as expressed in the teaching of the friars, "who obscured rather than explained religious truths." The political objects were the securing for the Philippines the reforms granted to Cuba, and the limiting of the power of the friars.

Copies of the "Rights of Man," and a history of the French Revolution, as well as other works, including treatises on military tactics and on the manufacture of powder and dynamite, were circulated among the members.

A secret society of supposed Masonic tendencies and origin, which distributed incendiary literature, and which organized large numbers of the lowest elements of the native population into a coherent body in opposition to the existing government, could not fail to be obnoxious to the Spanish authorities. Efforts were made to suppress it, and the mark of initiation was ground for the imprisonment of the person bearing it.

This was the situation in 1896. Andrés Bonifacio was the President, elected on the 1st of January, and Emilio Aguinaldo presided over the lodge at Cavite. Aguinaldo was then twenty-six years of age, and municipal captain of Cavite Viejo. Having occasion to visit Cavite to receive the orders of the Provincial Governor, he learned that a list of the members of the Katipunan had fallen into the hands of the Spaniards, and that the priest at Cavite Viejo was endeavoring to cause his arrest. He hastened back to his town, and, with the aid of his lieutenants, called together the members, explained to them their danger, and with them took up arms against the Spaniards. This was on the 26th of August, 1896. Within five days, Aguinaldo and his adherents had taken possession of nearly every town in the province, surprising the small garrisons and securing their arms. The insurrection spread rapidly throughout the Tagal provinces, where the Katipunan had been established. Andrés Bonifacio was killed,

it is believed, at the instigation of Aguinaldo, and the latter assumed control of the society and of the forces in the field.*

The Spaniards sent a large force against the insurgents, and in eight months, or by May, 1897, had utterly routed them and driven their chief and a remnant of his forces to seek refuge in the mountains of the eastern coast. Here, after his defeat, and while a fugitive in the inaccessible fastnesses of wild and unknown mountains, Aguinaldo states that he proclaimed a Philippine Republic, and opened up negotiations with the Spanish Governor-General, Primo de Rivera. As a result, the "Treaty of Biak-na-Bató" was signed on the 14th of December, 1897, by the terms of which Aguinaldo and those who wished to follow him were "free to live on foreign soil," and were to receive \$800,000 as "indemnity," the money to be delivered personally to Aguinaldo. All arms were to be delivered to the Spanish authorities, who were to place two Generals in Aguinaldo's hands as hostages for the delivery of the first installment (\$400,000) of the indemnity. Aguinaldo also avers that by this treaty Rivera agreed to suppress religious orders in the Islands and to grant autonomy, though these provisions were not reduced to writing.

More than one thousand rifles were delivered to the Spanish authorities, and the first installment of the indemnity was turned over to Aguinaldo; the second was never paid. The insurrection was at an end; the *Te Deum* was sung in the churches and normal conditions prevailed throughout the Philippines.†

So began and ended the insurrection of 1896. It lasted about fourteen months, and the operations on both sides seem to have been conducted with great cruelty. The insurgents burnt and sacked churches and convents, and many friars were murdered. The insurrection "was begun without any definite political object" whatever,‡ but was merely a desperate and successful effort on the part of Aguinaldo and his fellow members of the Katipunan to escape imprisonment by the Spanish Government. It ended by the buying off of the leaders, as above stated, and the society which gave rise to it was, for the time being, suppressed.

*"I do not now care to inquire into the death of Andrés Bonifacio, for, in truth, I know nothing of the facts in the case, and I am glad of it, since, perhaps, all that might be said of it would be in derogation of one or the other of the two gigantic figures of our revolution." "Religión del Katipunan," p. 40.

†This account of the insurrection and the treaty is taken from the "Religión del Katipunan," and from the "Reseña Verídica de la Revolución Filipina," by Emilio Aguinaldo, Tula, 1899.

‡Circular addressed to Spaniards, Cavite, June 30, 1898.

On the outbreak of war between the United States and Spain, Aguinaldo and his exiled companions saw an opportunity by which they might secure a prize which hitherto had never entered their wildest dreams. Pending the outbreak of hostilities, they had been interviewed by the naval and civil officers of our government, for the purpose of securing information as to conditions then existing in the Philippines, and ascertaining whether the natives would be friendly or hostile to the Americans. With the enthusiasm of youth, they thought that they might perhaps get control of the Philippines; their imagination carried them still further, and they dreamed of a general Malay Empire, wherein all of that race should be subject to Tagals of Luzon.

As a first step, they decided, in a meeting held in Hong-Kong on May 4th, 1898, to aid the Americans, to secure arms from them, and then, if the Islands were not delivered to themselves, to use those arms to drive the Americans into the sea.

Aguinaldo accordingly returned to the Philippines, and landing at Cavite under American protection, proceeded to gather his adherents about him. Arms were furnished them, and they moved against the outlying Spanish garrisons, most of which surrendered after a slight resistance, for want of ammunition. On the 24th of May, Aguinaldo declared himself Dictator of the Islands, and on the 12th of June he proclaimed the independence of the Philippines.

The first troops from America arrived on June 30th; these were followed by others, and by August 1st the Americans numbered about 10,000 men. Manila surrendered to the forces of the United States on the 13th of August. Aguinaldo desired to loot the city, claiming that his troops were entitled to a share of the booty, but he was informed that the town would not be sacked, and compelled to move his troops outside its limits.

Pending the ratification of the Treaty of Paris, no move was made by the American troops. On January 4th, General Otis proclaimed the sovereignty of the United States over the Islands. On the 26th, Aguinaldo announced a Philippine Republic, with himself as President.

Since his arrival, he had worked unremittingly toward the accomplishment of the purposes and plans mapped out in Hong-Kong. At the suggestion of Sandico, the author of the plan to slay without mercy and spare no person of white skin in the

Philippines, the Katipunan was revived; Aguinaldo announced that all Filipinos were members of the society, whether they wished or not, and a new Katipunan was formed, whose objects were the expulsion of the Americans and the "liberty of the country." Its emissaries, backed by military force, were sent to all parts of the Islands. The natives, who but recently were enthusiastic in their reception of the Americans, were turned against them, the ready credulity of an ignorant people accepting without hesitancy the wildest tales of Yankee treachery, cruelty and savagery which were told them. Prominent men who declined to join the movement were put to death, "to encourage the others." It was announced that all who were not with the proposed insurrection were traitors and should die. The newly appointed presidents of towns were required to take an oath that they would never serve any but the government declared by Aguinaldo. Head men and proprietors who were forced or induced to join, initiated their people. By every means in their power, the leaders endeavored to cultivate a national sentiment. Some even proposed a national religion, Bathalism, an idealized form of the primitive religion of the Islands, and the worship of God under the ancient name of Bathala.

A numerous army was raised and equipped and every preparation made for attacking the Americans, who with their small force occupied Manila and the immediately surrounding country. Open hostilities were begun on February 4th, 1899. The self-restraint previously exercised by the American soldiery had been misunderstood by the Filipinos, who had taken it for a sign of fear; they were undeceived at the first battle, and were driven back at all points; in the brief campaign that followed, they were pushed as far as the small number of our troops would with safety allow. The necessity for the return of the volunteers, who had enlisted only for the war with Spain, prevented the immediate termination of the struggle, and much of the ground gained had to be relinquished in order to protect the vitally important positions about Manila. On the arrival of the new volunteers in October, 1899, active operations were at once resumed; the organized armies of the insurrection were speedily dispersed, and every inhabited part of the Islands occupied by our troops. Aguinaldo was a fugitive, hiding in the mountains of the north, and his so-called Government completely destroyed. The stake played for

by the Hong-Kong conspirators, who represented nobody but themselves, was evidently lost. To all reasoning men, the futile wickedness of continuing the struggle was apparent, but whether in the hope of making another profitable treaty with the Americans, or encouraged to a vain hope of ultimate success by the false assurances of their representatives, who were enjoying life in foreign capitals, and by the utterances of some people in America, with a childish inability to grasp the facts of the situation the native leaders determined upon a species of warfare which is denounced and outlawed by all civilized nations. The so-called guerrilla tactics adopted consisted mainly of assassination. Our soldiers were avoided. A few small and scattered bands remained under arms, more as personal guards for the chiefs and a means of terrorizing the natives than as effective units for the conduct of military operations. They hid in mountain retreats and in the recesses of the dense forests of the plains, attacking only when the chances were overwhelmingly in their favor. The great majority of the insurgents dispersed to their homes, hid their arms and resumed the appearance and pursuits of peaceful life in towns occupied by American troops. In a strictly military sense the war was over, but neither peace nor tranquillity had been restored. The insurrection continued, its forces being now directed, not against the Americans, but against the natives.

It has been stated that the Katipunan was revived, and that all Filipinos had been declared members of the fraternity whether they wished or not. The President of the society was also President of the so-called Republic, and the Captain-General of its armies. The Government and the Katipunan were practically one, and the symbols of the latter appeared on the seals and stamps of the former. Military operations had failed, the Government had fallen, and its armies were dispersed. The end now sought was to prevent the people from accepting the government of the United States, and the Katipunan was entrusted with this task. The Tagal leaders had, by this time, realized that they were too weak to accomplish alone the designs with which they had started out. In the first days of their power they had ruthlessly overridden the other tribes and had committed numerous outrages, murders and robberies upon them. The feeling of hostility against the Tagals had caused the Americans to be warmly

welcomed in many parts of the Islands. The Katipunan now appealed to all Filipinos, took for its motto the words, "Union, Equality and Fraternity," declaring that it took no regard of "pride of position and dialect, by which a person being rich sets himself above the poor, or being Tagal, above the Ilocano, Pangasinan, Visayano," etc. The tribes mentioned are those which had probably suffered most under the brief Tagal rule.

After American occupation was complete throughout the Archipelago, the Katipunan, aided by secrecy, by force and by the character of the people, spread throughout the country, pervading every town and hamlet, and striking terror into every native household. The people were forbidden, under pain of death, to accept any office under the Americans; or, accepting it, were compelled also to subscribe to an agreement to obey the orders of the Katipunan, or the military chiefs hiding in their neighborhood, and to collect contributions of money and supplies for them. Every town and province had its dual set of officers, those elected under the American laws, and the secret appointees of the Katipunan. Often the elections held under American auspices were controlled by the society and its agents elected to office. Over all floated the American flag, but the real power recognized and feared by the people was the Katipunan.

The oath of the society, sealed with the "pact of blood," required members to keep secrets of the society and to comply blindly with its laws. The laws punished with death those who failed to obey the orders of the chiefs or to give warning if the society were endangered, or those who should betray any of its secrets, or who declined to execute a punishment ordered. These were no idle threats, nor dead letter laws. The society was brotherly and benignant toward those who complied with its rules, but inexorable toward offenders, and halted not at the means of punishment. They spared neither sex nor age. Men who aided the Americans were murdered. Three native policemen of Laoag, for accepting such positions, were enticed to an adjoining town, bound hand and foot, dropped head foremost into a well and buried alive. Three women and an old man, falsely accused of being American spies, were cut to pieces with bolos, and buried still alive in an old well. A prominent Ilocano, accused of being friendly to the Americans, and eight of his companions, were shot near Puncan. A man of Taytay, accused

of "going to be an American spy," and his companion, were placed bound and kneeling beside their open grave, knocked into it with a bar of iron, and buried alive, one on top of the other as they fell. Five more were murdered in the same town for suspected friendliness to the Americans. That the people might see the results of disobedience, these murders were not infrequently committed in open day before numerous witnesses. Sometimes, tortures were added to make the lesson more impressive. This list of murders may be almost indefinitely multiplied. Friendly natives were slain by hundreds, perhaps thousands: no town probably but had its list of murders by the Katipunan. Usually, their work was done at night; the hidden arms were brought forth, and an armed band would seize its victim and execute the punishment. The natives dreaded the secret, swift and sure retribution which overtook those who expressed sympathy with the American cause, or were merely suspected of such sympathy. On every side flowed the blood of Katipunan victims; the natives, terror-stricken, huddled in the towns, but even there, under the very eyes of the military authorities, the vengeance of the society would seek out and follow those who had been marked for "punishment." Not only offenders against the society were amenable, but its "justice" threatened their families, parents, brothers, sisters and children. It was a reign of blood and terror.

It is difficult for one accustomed to the conditions which obtain in civilized America to understand how a people could allow themselves to be so dominated by such a society; how such a society, whose existence was manifest to outsiders only by murders, extortions, and robberies, could continue to exist.

Even in the United States, it is true, a secret organization may for a time terrorize the people. Many will recall the effect of the Ku-Klux Klan upon the negroes of the South; the terror spread by the Molly Maguires in Pennsylvania, or by the Mafia in Louisiana. These were harmless and innocent organizations compared with the Philippine society. The victims of the Katipunan have been exclusively natives; it has not sought to resist our military forces; it has not fought, nor have its members attempted or desired to fight at any risk to themselves. American military operations have been mostly confined to long tramps in search of an elusive foe hidden in mountain or forest, and

protected by a people afraid to give the slightest information concerning him.

An ignorant people, the Filipinos have been governed by soldiers or friars through their fears or their superstitions. A government of law is unknown to them. They obey those they fear most, and they know no other law. In each town were the military chief and the friar; under these were the municipal captains, and the head men or "*principalia*." To these the people rendered blind, unquestioning obedience. Neither man nor woman would marry, engage in service, or do any act out of the ordinary, without consulting and obtaining the consent of the head men. The laborers of a proprietor, often hundreds in number, were his obedient slaves. In some parts of the Islands, a tangible ground of opposition to the American sovereignty was that proprietors would lose their hold on their peons.*

The great majority of the people, the ordinary "*hombres*," are but slightly removed from savagery. They are traditional liars; they lie freely and fluently whenever their interests or fears are involved, and usually when they are ignorant of the questioner's motives.† They are densely, almost inconceivably, ignorant. Felipe Agoncillo placed the number of Filipinos who can read and write at sixty-three per cent. of the population. It is possible that these figures might apply in Manila. In the provinces they most certainly do not. In a census of two towns, it was found that less than three per cent. could read and write Spanish; less than fourteen per cent. could read and write their own dialect. These towns were both in a Tagal province where opportunities were equal to or above the average. There is no Tagal literature. A few books of plays representing struggles between Christians and Moors have been translated by the friars. A knowledge of Spanish may be taken as a liberal measure of the culture of the people, although many who speak Spanish have never read a book in their lives. Many natives are so ignorant that they do not know their own names, their own ages, or the names of their parents.‡

*The writer knew of a case where for a debt of ten dollars in Mexican money, the man worked for the proprietor some years, and until his death. The man's son took the place of his father, and worked until he died. A daughter grew up to be eight years of age, when the proprietor thought she could be made useful, and called for her services also. Such service is practically for life.

†See "*Religión del Katipunán*," pp. 12 and 13.

‡Many persons of both sexes and all classes not only did not know how to read and write, but they were ignorant of their surnames, their

Murder is scarcely regarded as a crime; familiarity with it has bred contempt. A native will frankly confess that he has killed so many men, but will plead that "he was ordered to do it." He will state that he murdered a man hostile to you or to your party solely to ingratiate himself in your favor. He will, with tears in his eyes, kill a member of his own family because ordered by the *Presidente* of the town so to do; he would kill his own child if required to do so by the *Presidente*. Another will squat beside a grave in which his companions are burying alive two of his fellow creatures, hear the muffled cries of the latter as the earth falls upon them growing fainter and fainter as its depth increases, and greedily devour meanwhile a mess of rice rejected by one of the victims of Katipunan "justice."* Such people are little above brutes, but of such is the bulk of the membership of the Katipunan, credulous recipients of its teachings, and mere unthinking instruments for the carrying out of whatever infamy may be directed by the leaders.†

Many of the leaders are ignorant men, scarcely a grade above their followers in intelligence or education, especially the local leaders of towns. Each of these is an irresponsible "chief," with absolute power of life or death, not only over his own members, but over any native upon whom he may see fit to visit the vengeance of the society, or his own. He must likewise execute, or cause to be executed, any order from authority higher than his own.

In every *barrio* are the agents of the society; the people are ever under the watchful eyes of its spies, quick to detect any act of hostility toward themselves, or of friendship toward the Americans. An accusation of either was equivalent to death, for there was no trial and no punishment but death.

It should be easy to imagine the effect of the Katipunan "punishments" on an ignorant and timorous people. For fear of their own lives they dare not refuse to obey Katipunan mandates; under compulsion, many have lent service as soldiers, and have contributed supplies and money to the insurgents; tongue-tied by

ages, the names of their fathers and mothers, and some could not tell their own surnames." Extract from address of Filipino councilman in January, 1901, advocating extension of the public school system.

*All the foregoing and many more are actual cases, of official record, in the Division of the Philippines.

†"From every point of view it is seen that the Katipunan is a terrible association for the very reason that it is composed of plebeian and ignorant people." "Religión del Katipunan," p. 37.

fear, they have not dared to denounce the perpetrators of crimes to the American authorities, for Katipunan vengeance is swift and certain. American justice is slow and tempered with mercy. It is far better to offend the Americans than the Katipunan.

Such has been the effective weapon of the insurgent leaders. By its aid an appearance of general hostility to America has been secured, which in point of fact by no means exists.

It may be granted that, in one sense, the motive of the society is patriotic, in that its stated object is the "liberty of the country"; but such methods cannot result in any real liberty. There are, perhaps, a few disinterested patriots in their ranks, but the leaders surely desire not liberty, but dominion—not freedom, but, for the masses, servitude. They desire not the day when Filipinos shall govern themselves, but that "in which Filipinos shall govern their Philippine children."* The writer has yet to meet a Filipino who understands what liberty is, as we know and understand liberty in America.

The power of the Katipunan is waning. When it falls, the insurrection will be at an end. The active military pursuit of its armed members, the legal trial and punishment of many for brutal murders and other crimes, the liberality of the American Government, which has granted to the Filipinos rights and privileges hitherto unknown to them, the high character of the work of the Philippine Commission, and the natural revolt against so dread an agency as the Katipunan, have all had effect in bringing thinking Filipinos to the American side.

In spite of encouragement from misguided American allies, and ill-considered resolutions of sympathy by the Legislatures of some American states, the inevitable result cannot long be postponed, and the bloody work of the Katipunan is nearing its end. When its dark shadow shall have passed from the land, the people may learn, in the sunlight of real freedom, that a government of law is liberty, and may fit themselves for the transfer of power, even now begun, from potentate to people.

L. W. V. KENNON.

*Address of Emilio Aguinaldo, Cavite Viejo, August 3d, 1898.